

age military retirees, the sad fact is with the passage of this legislation we are breaking our previous promise to taxpayers to reduce the deficit. Instead of coming up with a real offset for a mere \$6.2 billion in spending, the Senate has chosen to resort to budgetary gimmicks to disguise the true cost of our politically expedient decisions, and has yet again punted the hard decisions that must be made to future generations.

By offsetting real and immediate spending with a promise of future spending reductions with the extension of sequestration cuts to Medicare through 2024, beyond the 10-year budget window, the savings from this budget trick will not materialize and taxpayers will not be made whole. By passing this legislation, we are sending a signal that this body does not have the fortitude to lead as our constituents have chosen us to do—to take on the sacred cows like military compensation that must be part of the national conversation about our spending and reform.

As we prepare to pass this legislation, every Member of this body would do well to consider these words by former Joint Chiefs Chairman Admiral Mike Mullen: “The most significant threat to our national security is our debt.” We best honor the sacrifice of our military veterans and realize a more safe and secure future by keeping our promise to reduce the national debt. By refusing to come up with a real offset to pay for the repeal of the COLA cut, the Senate is undermining our veterans, our country, and our future.●

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

### DEFICIT REDUCTION

Mr. FLAKE. Madam President, I rise today to talk for a short period of time about the magnitude of our budget, debt, and deficit. Against the backdrop of a debt ceiling increase, Members of both parties are going to today, likely, repeal one of the deficit reduction measures included in the bipartisan budget agreement that was approved less than 2 months ago. How do we convey to the Nation the seriousness about solving the debt crisis when at the first sign of political pressure we repeal one of the deficit reduction measures?

As we all know, the Ryan-Murray budget deal included modest reductions in some spending programs over the next 10 years in order to increase discretionary spending caps in fiscal years 2014 and 2015. I voted against this agreement because I thought the spending cuts did not go far enough. I do not think we are treating our debt and deficit seriously enough.

Second, I have been down that road of trading spending increases today for spending cuts later many times. It does not work. We have seen that play be-

fore. We know how it ends. Year after year Members of Congress simply refuse to stick to the budget discipline we said we would stick to. Exhibit 1 is before us today. The Congress is about to undo—in fact, repeal—one of those provisions, as I mentioned.

It is important to note that the cost-of-living adjustment that will be repealed—or the reform that will be repealed was a cost-of-living adjustment—a COLA—for military retirees resulting in less than a 1-percent reduction for working-age military retirees. That is 1 percent. It stopped far short of the elimination of COLA requirements for retirees under the age of 62 that the Simpson-Bowles Commission recommended.

Certainly our veterans deserve the utmost respect and generous retirement pay. However, it has been reported that regardless of age, members of our armed services could easily, in some instances, receive retirement and health benefits for 40 years or more.

Some of my colleagues have suggested that failing to support measures to repeal the COLA reduction is tantamount to turning our backs on veterans. This is untrue. This is a mischaracterization of the issue at hand. I think we all know that. The U.S. military is at a crossroads. Fast-growing retirement pay and health benefits are threatening to displace investments in the readiness of our Armed Forces.

I encourage my colleagues to take a hard look at the fiscal mess we face before we vote to roll back one of the few deficit reduction measures the President and Congress have agreed to. Our fiscal situation is serious. We cannot ignore that forever.

This problem will continue to get worse. Yes, we ought to be reforming entitlement programs so they will be around for future beneficiaries, veterans and others, but for goodness' sake, when deficit reduction measures get signed into law, surely at some point we need to stand by them.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

### TEMPORARY DEBT LIMIT EXTENSION ACT

Mr. REID. I ask the Chair to lay before the Senate a message from the House with respect to S. 540.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Chair lays before the Senate a message from the House which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

S. 540

*Resolved*, That the bill from the Senate (S. 540) entitled “An Act to designate the air

route traffic control center located in Nashua, New Hampshire, as the ‘Patricia Clark Boston Air Route Traffic Control Center’.”, do pass with the following amendment:

Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert:

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

*This Act may be cited as the “Temporary Debt Limit Extension Act”.*

#### SEC. 2. TEMPORARY EXTENSION OF PUBLIC DEBT LIMIT.

(a) *IN GENERAL.*—Section 3101(b) of title 31, United States Code, shall not apply for the period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act and ending on March 15, 2015.

(b) *SPECIAL RULE RELATING TO OBLIGATIONS ISSUED DURING EXTENSION PERIOD.*—Effective March 16, 2015, the limitation in effect under section 3101(b) of title 31, United States Code, shall be increased to the extent that—

(1) the face amount of obligations issued under chapter 31 of such title and the face amount of obligations whose principal and interest are guaranteed by the United States Government (except guaranteed obligations held by the Secretary of the Treasury) outstanding on March 16, 2015, exceeds

(2) the face amount of such obligations outstanding on the date of the enactment of this Act.

#### SEC. 3. RESTORING CONGRESSIONAL AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONAL DEBT.

(a) *EXTENSION LIMITED TO NECESSARY OBLIGATIONS.*—An obligation shall not be taken into account under section 2(b)(1) unless the issuance of such obligation was necessary to fund a commitment incurred pursuant to law by the Federal Government that required payment before March 16, 2015.

(b) *PROHIBITION ON CREATION OF CASH RESERVE DURING EXTENSION PERIOD.*—The Secretary of the Treasury shall not issue obligations during the period specified in section 2(a) for the purpose of increasing the cash balance above normal operating balances in anticipation of the expiration of such period.

Mr. REID. I move to concur in the House amendment, and I have a cloture motion at the desk.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 540.

Harry Reid, Robert Menendez, Benjamin L. Cardin, Tom Harkin, Amy Klobuchar, Christopher Murphy, Patty Murray, Jon Tester, Richard J. Durbin, Barbara Boxer, Angus S. King, Jr., Claire McCaskill, Richard Blumenthal, Sheldon Whitehouse, Jack Reed, Debbie Stabenow, Elizabeth Warren.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum required under rule XXII be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the